CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method of optimizing a solution for a complex problem solvable by a plurality of software tool packages, comprising:

5   selectively converting problem data into a format appropriate for at least one preselected vendor's set of software tools;

inputting said formatted problem data into said at least one preselected vendor's set of software tools; and

if more than one vendor has been preselected, comparing results of

10   resultant solutions and selecting the optimum solution based on a criteria provided in said problem data.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving said problem data from a decision maker.

3.   The method of claim 2, wherein said receiving of said problem data from

15   said decision maker comprises communicating via a computer network.

4.   The method of claim 2, further comprising forwarding a result to said decision maker.

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5.   The method of claim 4, wherein said result comprises at least one of:

said resultant solutions from said at least one vendor's set of software

tools; and

said optimum solution.

5   6.   The method of claim 4, wherein said forwarding of said result comprises

communicatiing via a computer network.

7.   The method of claim 2, wherein said decision maker sends said problem

data to a single solutions provider who exercises a plurality of vendors' software

tool packages.

10   8.   The method of claim 2, wherein said decision maker sends said problem

data to a plurality of vendors, each of which exercises said problem data in said

vendor's software tool package.

9.   The method of claim 8, wherein each said vendor subsequently forwards

said solution to a predesignated solutions provider who determines, based on said

15   criteria, an optimal solution from said plurality of vendors' solutions.

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10. A system for determining an optimized solution to a problem solvable by software tools, comprising:

means for converting a problem description into a format suitable for a software tool package for a plurality of predetermined vendors, each said software tool package comprising at least one software tool;

means for exercising said problem description on said plurality of vendors' software tool packages; and

means for ranking results of said plurality of vendors' software tool packages.

11. The system of claim 10, further comprising means for entering, by an originator, description data describing said problem to be solved, including a criteria for verification and comparison.

12. The system of claim 11, further comprising means for returning at least one result to said originator.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein said at least one result comprises at least one of the following:

a result of at least one of said at least one software package;

said ranking results; and

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an optimium solution based on said ranking of said results.

14.   The system of claim 11, wherein said originator enters said description data via a computer network.

15.   The system of claim 12, wherein said means for returning said at least one result comprises a computer network for communicating with said originator.

16.   The system of claim 11, wherein said originator sends said description data to a single solutions provider who exercises a plurality of vendors' software tool packages.

17.   The system of claim 11, wherein said originator sends said description data to a plurality of vendors, each of which exercises said problem description in said vendor's software tool package.

18.   The system of claim 17, wherein each said vendor subsequently forwards said solution to a predesignated solutions provider who determines, based on said criteria for verification and comparison, an optimal solution from said plurality of vendors' solutions.

19.   A system for determining an optimal solution to a problem solvable by

software tools, comprising:

a first computer terminal permitting an originator to enter problem data

describing a problem to be solved, said data including verification criteria and a

5   comparison criteria, and to transmit said problem data; and

at least one second computer for selectively receiving said problem data

from said first computer, said at least one second computer containing at least one

software tool package for exercising said problem data, said at least one second

computer selectively transmitting a result of said exercising of said problem data to

10   at least one of said first computer and a predesignated third computer.

20.   The system of claim 19, further comprising a software tool to verify said

result against said verification criteria.

21.   The system of claim 19, wherein, if more than one software tool package

exercises said problem data to produce more than one problem solution, said

15   verification software tool additionally ranks said more than one problem solution,

based on said comparison criteria.

22.   A system for optimizing the solution of a complex problem solvable by

software tool packages, comprising:

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a first interface for allowing an operator at a first computer to enter a

problem description, said problem description including a verification criteria and a

comparison criteria;

a second interface for allowing said operator to transmit said problem

5   description from said first computer to a second computer;

a third interface for allowing said second computer to receive said

transmitted problem description;

a first software tool using said verification criteria to verify a solution of

said problem description;

10   a second software tool using said comparison criteria to determine a

ranking of any solutions of said problem description; and

a fourth interface to transmit said ranking back to said first computer.

23.   A system for determining an optimized solution to a problem solvable by

software tools, comprising:

15   a converter providing, from a problem description, a format suitable for a

software tool package for a plurality of predetermined vendors, each said software

tool package comprising at least one software tool;

an oversight module exercising said problem description on said plurality of

vendors' software tool packages; and

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a ranker module sorting and ranking results of said plurality of vendors' software tool packages.

24. A computer readable medium containing instructions executable by a computer, said instructions comprising:

5   a first interface for allowing an operator at a first computer to enter a problem description, said problem description including a verification criteria and a comparison criteria;

a second interface for allowing said operator to transmit said problem description from a first computer to a second computer;

10   a third interface for allowing said second computer to receive said transmitted problem description;

a first software tool using said verification criteria to verify a solution of said problem description;

a second software tool using said comparison criteria to determine a

15   ranking of any solutions of said problem description; and

a fourth interface to transmit said ranking back to said first computer.

25. A computer readable medium containing instructions executable by a computer to perform a method of optimizing a solution for a complex problem solvable by a plurality of software tool packages, said instructions comprising:

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selectively converting problem data into a format appropriate for at least

one preselected vendor's set of software tools;

inputting said formatted problem data into said at least one preselected

vendor's set of software tools; and

5   if more than one vendor has been preselected, comparing results of

resultant solutions and a selection of an optimum solution based on a criteria

provided in said problem data.